

# 2 Spelling and punctuation

## ■ tense

This is the form of the verb which shows whether the action takes place in the present, past or future.

*I live in London.* (present tense verb)

*I used to live in Berlin.* (past tense verb)

*I will move to Germany.* (future tense verb)

Note that there is no simple relationship between tense and time; for example, the present tense can refer to present or future time.

## ■ transitive

A transitive verb (indicated by *v.t.* in most dictionaries) is one which takes a direct object:

*I found the keys.*

An intransitive verb (indicated by *v.i.* in most dictionaries) is one which does not take a direct object:

*We danced all night.*

Many verbs can be used both transitively and intransitively.

*We ate and then went out.*

*We ate a huge meal and then fell asleep.*

## ■ verb

A verb is a word which refers to an action or state. The form of the verb changes to show person and tense.

*I cycle, she walks, we ate, they have finished*

## ■ voice

The relationship between verb and subject is indicated by the use of either the active or the passive voice.

*Many people witnessed the accident.* (active voice)

*The accident was witnessed by many people.* (passive voice)

Although the meaning of both sentences is the same, in the active sentence *Many people* is the subject, while in the passive sentence *The accident* is the subject.

## 2.1 The German alphabet

■ 2.1.1 The German alphabet is read out as follows (pronounce the phonetic renderings as in German):

a	ah	f	eff	k	kah	p	peh	u	uh	x	iks
b	beh	g	geh	l	el	q	kuh	v	fau	y	üpsilon
c	tseh	h	ha	m	em	r	err	w	weh	z	tset
d	deh	i	ih	n	en	s	es				
e	eh	j	jot	o	oh	t	teh				

In addition the following four letters are used: the three Umlaut vowels *ä*, *ö*, *ü* and the letter *ß* (pronounced 'eszet').

■ 2.1.2 The Umlaut sign *¨* shows a change in pronunciation of the vowel. It occurs, for example, in the formation of many plurals, certain verb forms and some comparatives and superlatives:

das Buch	– die Bücher	<i>book, books</i>
lassen	– er lässt	<i>to let, he lets</i>
groß	– größer	<i>big, bigger</i>

■ 2.1.3 The *ß* is equivalent to *ss*. It exists only as a small letter (written *SS* when in capitals) and is used

- after a long vowel if followed by another vowel: fließen (*to flow*), gießen (*to pour*), Straße (*street*)
- after a diphthong if followed by another vowel: außen (*outside*), beißen (*to bite*), reißen (*to tear*)

Compound words are treated as if the individual parts of the word were independent:

Missstimmung (*ill humour*), Kreissparkasse (*local savings bank*), Kreißaal (*delivery room*)